

Level 4 Potential Conservation Area (PCA) Report

Name Upper Clear Creek

Site Code S.USCOHP*1208

IDENTIFIERS

Site ID 307 Site Class PCA

Site Alias None

Network of Conservation Areas (NCA)

<u>NCA Site ID</u>	<u>NCA Site Code</u>	<u>NCA Site Name</u>
-		No Data

County

Clear Creek (CO)

SITE DESCRIPTION

Site Description

The Upper Clear Creek site is a stream valley, bounded on the north by Interstate 70. The south is the steep slope of Mt. Sniktau. Much of the stream valley is along the base of the densely forested slope. The forest is mid-aged and sized post-fire stands. Patches of older stands occur in the more mesic areas. The entire base of the slope is mesic to wet with a mossy understory. Many streams, rivulets, seeps and springs enter the stream valley from the mesic north-facing slope. Several small areas are wet and therefore dominated by willows and deep moss and carices. Birch is scattered throughout the wetter areas. At the mouth of Herman Gulch significant plant associations and a single rare plant species occur. Much of the trail route is along the base of a north-facing slope that is densely forested with a mix of Engelmann spruce (*Picea engelmannii*), subalpine fir (*Abies lasiocarpa*), a few scattered quaking aspen (*Populus tremuloides*), and lodgepole pine (*Pinus contorta*). Most is moderately aged/sized post fire stands with some small patches of older stands (in more mesic sites). The entire base of the slope is mesic to wet with a mossy understory. Any swales of concave areas of the slope have streams, rivulets, springs or seeps with a more lush understory. There are several small areas that are very wet and dominated by willows (*Salix* spp.), with deep moss and sedges (*Carex* spp.). *Betula glandulosa* is scattered throughout those wetter microsites. At the mouth of Herman Gulch on the south side of I-70 is a *Betula* - *Salix* - *Carex* - *Sphagnum* fen with a mix of *Salix planifolia*, *S. geyeriana* (*drummondiana*?), *S. brachycarpa* and *Betula glandulosa*. The herbaceous layer consists of several *Carex* spp. and *Calamagrostis* spp. The carices are dominant. In the center are several patches of *Carex* wetlands with small scattered clumps of *Betula*. The entire fen has a thick moss layer, probably *Sphagnum* spp., in some locations hummocky and less than 1 ft thick ca. 1 acre on the east portion of the fen supports a population of *Carex leptalea*. This area has a very thick moss layer with small hummocks on which *C. leptalea* is growing. The matrix of microtopographic dips has *Carex aquatilis* with scattered clumps of small *Betula glandulosa* shrubs (<1m in height). Nearby is a very wet, seepy area with much *Carex rostrata*. starting at the Bakerville end of the route, the slope (forested portion) is wetter than that to the north of Herman Gulch Mouth. In this area several uncommon species were found such as *Parnassia fimbriata*, *Cornus canadensis* and *Lycopodium annotinum*. There is a drier willow carr about 0.5 miles downstream of the Herman Gulch Fen. It is a mix of *S. planifolia* and *S. brachycarpa* or *S. wolfii*. The understory has much *Calamagrostis canadensis* and some small patches of *Carex rostrata* around small ponds. There is a power line thru the north side of the carr with an old roadbed, which the bike path will probably follow and which should have little impact on the hydrology of this carr. Elevation of the site is from 9,800 ft to 10,600 ft. The route to the north of the mouth of Herman Gulch is less seepy and wet. Much of the forest here is *Pinus contorta* with scattered spruce or fir. Understory is very mossy with low cover of shrubs or herbaceous plants, probably due to low light levels. This portion has much *Linnaea borealis*.

Key Environmental Factors

No Data

Climate Description

No Data

Land Use History

No Data

Cultural Features

No Data

Minimum Elevation	9,800.00 Feet	2,987.00 Meters
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Maximum Elevation 10,600.00 Feet 3,231.00 Meters

SITE DESIGN

Site Map P - Partial

Mapped Date 09/12/1994

Designer Pague, C.A.

Boundary Justification

The conservation planning boundaries include all known occurrences of natural heritage resources. Buffers are also included, primarily to protect ecological processes that maintain the wetland environment. boundary surrounds the element occurrences and part way up the slope to the south to encompass springs and seeps supplying water to the fen.

Primary Area 7,354.13 Acres 2,976.12 Hectares

SITE SIGNIFICANCE

Biodiversity Significance Rank B3: High Biodiversity Significance

Biodiversity Significance Comments

The biodiversity significance rank is based on a good (B-ranked) occurrence of globally rare (G4T1Q/S1) subspecies, the Southern Rocky Mountain boreal toad (*Anaxyrus boreas* pop. 1). There are also good examples of globally common plants and plant communities.

Other Values Rank No Data

Other Values Comments

No Data

ASSOCIATED ELEMENTS OF BIODIVERSITY

Element			Global	State	Driving
State ID	State Scientific Name	State Common Name	Rank	Rank	Site Rank
24194	<i>Carex leptalea</i>	bristle-stalk sedge	G5	S1	N
24850	<i>Salix planifolia</i> / <i>Carex aquatilis</i> Wet Shrubland	Subalpine Riparian Willow Carr	G5	S5	N
21234	<i>Draba streptobrachia</i>	Colorado Divide whitlow-grass	G3	S3	N
20351	<i>Anaxyrus boreas</i> pop. 1	Boreal Toad (Southern Rocky Mountain Population)	G4T1Q	S1	Y
18795	<i>Carex utriculata</i> Wet Meadow	Beaked Sedge Montane Wet Meadows	G5	S5	N

LAND MANAGEMENT ISSUES

Land Use Comments

This portion of Clear Creek is popular with fishermen primarily at the points of vehicle access (Bakerville, Mouth of Herman Gulch). Grazing history of forest slope is unknown, but doesn't appear to have been much. Areas on the north-facing slope have been logged (salvage after fire?) and there are scattered old campsites (rusty cans). Elk sign was extensive. Hunters may use the north face of Mt Shiktau.

Natural Hazard Comments

Careless hunters ? And flooding of Clear Creek ?

Exotics Comments

No exotics were apparent except at parking areas where there are some weedy species, but not exotics.

Offsite

Loveland Ski Area bounds the north end of the site and cross country skiers may use the Clear Creek area. Any logging on north face of Mt Shiktau could impact the fen and seeps on the slope.

Information Needs

No Data

REFERENCES

Reference ID Full Citation

- No Data

ADDITIONAL TOPICS

Additional Topics

Site owned by Arapaho National Forest, Clear Creek Ranger District.

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LOCATORS

Nation United States

Latitude 394204N

State Colorado

Longitude 1055154W

Quad Code Quad Name

39105-F8 Loveland Pass

39105-F7 Grays Peak

Watershed Code Watershed Name

14010001 Colorado headwaters

10190004 Clear

VERSION

Version Date 09/12/1994

Version Author Pague, C.A.

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